DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 360 073 PS 021 579

AUTHOR Eberly, Mary B.; And Others
TITLE Variations of Parent and Adolescent Emotional Expression: Differences by Pubertal Status, Gender, and Conversation.
PUB DATE Mar 93
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (60th, New Orleans, LA, March 25-28, 1993).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescent Development; *Adolescents; Affective Behavior; *Age Differences; *Discourse Analysis; Elementary School Students; Intermediate Grades; Interpersonal Communication; *Parent Child Relationship; *Preadolescents; Secondary Education; Secondary School Students; Sex Differences
IDENTIFIERS *Conversation; *Emotional Expression; Negative Affect; Positive Affect

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effects of adolescent pubertal status, adolescent gender, parent gender, and conversation topic on parent and adolescent affective expression. Subjects were 85 adolescents in fifth through ninth grade who participated in 2 separate 8-minute conversations, one pleasant and one unpleasant, with their mother and father separately. Results showed that in general, less positive and more negative affect was expressed during late puberty than during early- or mid-puberty. Father-adolescent interactions were more neutral than mother-adolescent interactions. Pleasant conversations were more neutral, and contained more positive and less negative affect, than unpleasant conversations. Results are discussed in terms of the distancing hypothesis, dyadic differences in relationships, and situational influences. (Author/MM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED360073

Variations of Parent and Adolescent Emotional Expression: Differences by Pubertal Status, Gender, and Conversation

Mary B. Eberly and Raymond Montemayor

The Ohio State University

Daniel J. Flannery

University of Arizona

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Mary B. Eberly
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper presented at Society for Research in Child Development Biennial Meeting, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 1993

PS021579

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Abstract

The present study examined the effects of adolescent pubertal status, adolescent gender, parent gender, and and conversation topic on parent and adolescent affective expression. Adolescents in grades 5 - 9 (N = 44 males, 41 females) participated in two 8-minute conversations, one pleasant and one unpleasant, with their mother and father, separately. In general, less positive and more negative affect was expressed during late puberty than during early- or mid-puberty. Father-adolescent interactions were more neutral than mother-adolescent interactions in which more positive and negative affect was witnessed. Pleasant conversations were more neutral, and contained more positive and less negative affect than unpleasant conversations. Results are discussed in terms of the distancing hypothesis, dyadic differences in relationships, and situational influences.

Introduction

The purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of adolescent pubertal status, adolescent gender, parent gender, and conversation topic on parent and adolescent affective expression. Researchers investigating parent-adolescent relations between pre- and post-puberty have often found an increase in negative interactions and conflicts (Collins, 1990), which are interpreted to represent distancing between parents and adolescents (Steinberg, 1988). Parents' and adolescents' expression of affect has not been investigated as part of the distancing process, even though relationship quality is often evaluated on the affect expressed. The present study investigates whether the frequency of positive, negative, and neutral affect expressed during interaction will mirror theoretical and empirical predictions. To elicit a representative range of affect, the present study included two conversations: one pleasant and one unpleasant. Including two tasks allowed for an examination of topic on parents and adolescents expression of affect.

Three hypotheses were investigated: (1) parents and adolescents would express less positive affect and more negative affect as pubertal status increased; (2) mothers and adolescents would express more positive and negative affect than fathers and adolescents, who would be more neutral; and (3) parents and adolescents would express more positive affect during

conversations about pleasant topics, and they would express more negative affect when talking about unpleasant topics.

Method

Subjects. Adolescents in grades 5 - 9 (N = 44 males, 41 females) and their mothers and fathers took part in this study. On the average, adolescents were 12.8 years, mothers were 41.8 years, and fathers were 43.5 years. Families were predominantly Caucasian and middle to upper-middle class.

Procedure. Topics for each 8-minute conversation were generated independently by each family member. Adolescents were interviewed using Tanner schematic drawings to determine pubertal status (early, mid, or late). All conversations were videotaped, transcribed, and later coded for affective expression. Affect was coded as positive, negative, neutral, mixed, or altered (average reliability was .76 kappa).

Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for proportion and arcsin transformed scores for each affect category. All analyses are based on the transformed scores.

Because the affect categories were significantly correlated, two repeated measures MANOVA's (pubertal status X parent gender X adolescent gender X conversation topic) were used to analyze the data, one MANOVA for parents' affective expression and one MANOVA for adolescents' affective expression. In Table 2 and Table 3, only the significant multivariate effects are presented. The

following results were obtained from the subsequent univariate analyses:

1. During late puberty, parents and adolescents expressed less positive and more negative affect than during early puberty or mid-puberty.
2. Daughters expressed more positive affect and were less neutral toward their parents than sons.
3. Mothers expressed more negative affect toward their adolescents than fathers, and fathers were more neutral with their adolescents than mothers.
4. Adolescents showed more positive affect toward their mothers, but adolescents were more neutral with their fathers. No difference was found for adolescents' expression of negative affect toward mothers or fathers.
5. In pleasant conversations, parents and adolescents were more neutral and expressed more positive affect and less negative affect.

Discussion

In general, the finding that parents and adolescents express more negative affect and less positive affect between middle and late puberty supports the distancing hypothesis. The affective expression may play two roles in this separation process. First, affective expression may result from the stress of the changes occurring in the parent-adolescent relationship. Second, the decrease positive affect and the increase in negative affect may be a catalyst which further fuels separation. The parent-

adolescent relationship becomes less enjoyable; consequently, less time and involvement is invested in this relationship.

Our finding that mother-adolescent interactions were more emotional and father-adolescent interactions were more neutral support findings which suggest that mother-adolescent relationships are characterized by reports of closeness and highly emotionally expressive interactions than father-adolescent relationships (Collins & Russell, 1991).

Last, the robust finding that conversation topic effects the type and frequency of affect expressed shows a high degree of situational influence on affective expression. More interestingly, the results show that the pleasantness of conversation is characterized by the amount of negative affect relative to positive affect. Pleasant conversations are characterized by less negative affect relative to positive affect, not more positive affect. Unpleasant conversations are comprised of more negative affect relative to positive affect, not less positive affect.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Positive, Negative, Neutral, Mixed, and Altered Affect for Parents and Adolescents: Proportions and Transformed Scores

	Parent		Adolescent	
Affect	Proportion	Transformed	Proportion	Transformed
Positive	.14 (.10)	.48 (.22)	.14 (.11)	.48 (.26)
Negative	.09 (.12)	.33 (.29)	.14 (.16)	.43 (.32)
Neutral	.56 (.16)	1.12 (.18)	.55 (.18)	1.09 (.22)
Mixed	.08 (.07)	.64 (.42)	.10 (.08)	.78 (.42)
Altered	.14 (.10)	1.00 (.40)	.07 (.06)	.66 (.40)

Note: The numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

Table 2

Pearson Correlations among Affective Categories* for Parents and Adolescents

Affect Category	Affect Category				
	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	Altered
Positive	.	-.47c	-.19c	.04	.18c
Negative	-.36c	.	-.54c	.07	-.09
Neutral	-.26c	-.45c	.	-.45c	-.36c
Mixed	.03	.16b	-.40c	.	.10
Altered	-.04	-.11a	-.40c	-.15b	.

Note: Correlations below the diagonal are for parents; correlations above the diagonal are for adolescents.

* Correlations for each affective category are based on standardized proportions.

a: $p < .05$; b: $p < .01$; c: $p < .001$.

Table 3

Means of Parent Emotional Expression Toward Adolescents for Pubertal Status, Parent Gender, and Conversation Topic

	Affect				
Effect	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	Altered
Pubertal Status: $F(10,304) = 5.19$, $p < .001$					
Early	.53a	.25a	1.12	.29	.54a
Middle	.49a	.28a	1.13	.32	.50ab
Late	.41b	.49b	1.09	.36	.46b
Parent Gender: $F(5,152) = 3.51$, $p < .01$					
Father	.44a	.32	1.15a	.32	.49
Mother	.51b	.36	1.08b	.34	.51
Conversation Topic: $F(5,152) = 40.13$, $p < .001$					
Pleasant	.52a	.20a	1.17a	.30a	.48
Unpleasant	.43b	.48b	1.06b	.35b	.52

Note: Within each factor, different letters in each columm represent significant differences ($p < .05$). Because adolescent gender was not significant in the overall MANOVA, means are not reported.

Table 4

Means of Adolescent Emotional Expression Toward Parents Pubertal Status, Adolescent Gender, Parent Gender, and Conversation Topic

	Affect				
Factor	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Mixed	Altered
Pubertal Status: $F(10,148) = 2.36$, $p < .05$					
Early	.52a	.36a	1.11a	.37	.32
Middle	.50a	.38a	1.11a	.40	.31
Late	.40b	.56b	1.04b	.41	.37
Adolescent Gender: $F(5,74) = 3.37$, $p < .01$					
Son	.43a	.44	1.12a	.40	.32
Daughter	.53b	.43	1.05b	.39	.35
Parent Gender: $F(5,230) = 3.55$, $p < .01$					
Father	.48	.39a	1.12a	.39	.32
Mother	.47	.48b	1.06b	.40	.35
Conversation Topic: $F(5,230) = 22.36$, p .001					
Pleasant	.51a	.31a	1.16a	.35a	.35
Unpleasant	.44b	.56b	1.02b	.44b	.32

Note: Within each factor, different letters in each colunm indicate significant differences ($p < .05$).